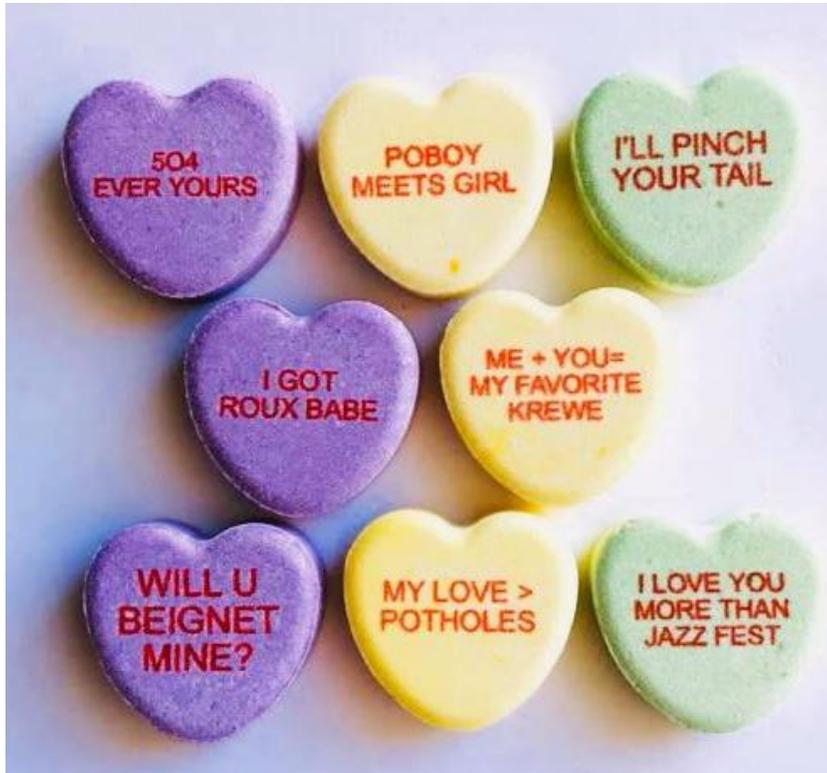


## New Orleans Love Songs

As Valentine's Day approaches, it is an appropriate time to take stock of the love songs recorded by New Orleans artists, as well as other tunes romantically connected with this great metropolis. In no particular order, here are just a few of the Crescent City's great love songs.



*NECCO style Valentine candy hearts by Lakeview couple Cherie Melancon Franz and her husband Arthur – photo by Thinkerella*

### ***Do You Know What It Means To Miss New Orleans***

One of the great love songs to New Orleans, *Do You Know What It Means To Miss New Orleans*, was written by two Yankees. The song's lyricist, Eddie DeLange, was from Long Island, New York, and composer Louis Alter was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts.

"Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans  
And miss it each night and day?  
I know I'm not wrong, the feeling's getting stronger  
The longer I stay away.

Miss the moss-covered vines, the tall sugar pines,  
Where mockingbirds used to sing.  
And I'd like to see the lazy Mississippi  
A-hurryin' into Spring.

Oh, the Mardi Gras, the memories  
Of Creole tunes that fill the air.  
I dream of oleanders in June,  
And soon I'm wishin' that I were there.

Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans  
When that's where you left your heart?  
And there's something more:  
I miss the one I care for  
More than I miss New Orleans."

Louis Armstrong truly owned the song (he and Billie Holiday introduced it in the 1947 film *New Orleans*), but some of the lyrics (albeit evocative and beautiful) just don't make any sense.



*Louis and Billie perform "Do You Know What It Means To Miss New Orleans" in the 1947 film "New Orleans".*

There are certainly a lot of pine trees on the Northshore, and, while there are some around the city, they are hardly a memorable feature. As for the trees in the song lyrics, tall sugar pines (*pinus lambertiana*) are found in the mountains of California and Oregon in the western United States, Baja California and northwestern Mexico – not in the Pelican State. Most abundant in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of central California, the sugar pine, said to be the world's largest pine, is not part of the Crescent City landscape.

And mockingbirds? We have them in New Orleans alright, but they're Northern mockingbirds, the only mockingbird species commonly found in North America.

At least DeLange got the "oleanders in june" part right. They are indeed in bloom in the summer, especially on some of the city's neutral grounds, such as those along Canal Boulevard.

And still, after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleanians fell in love with their city all over again through the words of this song.



*Louis Alter*

*Eddie DeLange*

*Art Neville*

### ***All These Things***

Since 1962, when Art Neville recorded this Toussaint composition on the Instant label, this song's tempo and lyrics made you want to hold your date extra close while dancing:

"The touch of your lips next to mine  
Gets me excited, makes me feel fine.  
The touch of your hand, your sweet hello,  
The fire inside you, when you're holding me close.

Your love's so warm and tender,  
The thrill is so divine.  
It is all these things  
That make you mine."

### ***I'm in Love Again***

The dynamic duo of Dave Bartholomew and Antoine "Fats" Domino delivered a big hit in 1956 with this gem. It peaked at number three for two weeks on the pop chart, and *My Blue Heaven* was its popular flip side.

"Yes, it's me and I'm in love again  
Ain't had no lovin' since you-know-when.  
You know I love you, yes I do  
And I'm savin' all my lovin' just for you."

Besides finding "his thrill on Blueberry Hill", "Fats" also sang *Whole Lotta Lovin'* and crooned the old standard, *I'm in the Mood For Love*.



*"Fats" Domino*

*Ernie K-Doe*

## ***Hello, My Lover***

William Shakespeare and the late great Ernie K-Doe both knew, "The course of true love never did run smooth." For your lesson in "loveology", listen to the words of his 1961 song:

"Hello, my lover, wherever you are,  
*Lover, wherever you are.*  
I've been a fool, my dear,  
A fool by far.  
*Lover, wherever you are...*

If you come back, my dear,  
There'll be some changes made.  
*Lover, wherever you are.*  
I will alter myself in every way.  
*Lover, wherever you are.*  
I'm gonna start a brand new policy,  
I'm gonna teach you a lesson in loveology.  
Hmmm hmmm, mmm mmm, mmm mmm mmm, Oh, yeah! ...

Once again, the above words are those of legendary composer Allen Toussaint, which Ernie K-Doe recorded on the Minit label.

## ***(I Don't Know Why) But I Do***

More specifically, *(I Don't Know Why I Love You) But I Do*, the song was released in February 1961 and later featured in the 1994 film *Forrest Gump*. Bobby Charles (real name Robert Charles Guidry) co-wrote the song with Paul Gayten, and it was recorded by Clarence "Frogman" Henry. It was Henry's biggest U.S. hit, reaching #4 in early 1961.

Bobby Charles (1938 – 2010), besides writing *(I Don't Know Why) But I Do*, earlier wrote and recorded *See You Later, Alligator* (also a big hit for Bill Haley & His Comets in '56) and *Walking To New Orleans* (1960) for "Fats" Domino. I love the fact that in Spain *See You Later, Alligator* was recorded under the title *Hasta Luego Cocodrilo*.

Here are the words to *(I Don't Know Why) But I Do*:

"I don't know why I love you but I do.  
I don't know why I cry so but I do.

I only know I'm lonely and that I want you only.  
I don't know why I love you but I do.

I can't sleep nights because I feel so restless.  
I don't know what to do, I feel so helpless.  
And since you've been away, I cry both night and day;  
I don't know why I love you but I do."



*Clarence "Frogman" Henry*

### ***Lipstick Traces***

"Your pretty brown eyes,  
Your wavy hair.  
I won't go home no more  
'Cause you're not there.  
I'm telling you now  
Like I told you before,  
I'm so in love with you,  
Don't leave me no more.  
*Leave me no more.*

Lipstick traces on a cigarette,  
Every memory lingers with me yet.  
I've got it bad like I told you before.  
I'm so in love with you,  
Don't leave me no more ...

I'm crazy 'bout you,  
Can't do without you.  
Wont you come back home?"



*Lipstick  
Traces*

*Benny Spellman*

Even if one doesn't smoke, it's such a great visual image: lipstick on a cigarette. Another fantastic two-sided Minit hit (with *Fortune Teller* on the other side), Toussaint wrote another great love song with *Lipstick Traces*, which was covered by the O'Jays in 1965. Benny Spellman's recording is also included on probably the greatest album of New Orleans music ever released: *New Orleans, Home of the Blues, Vol. 2*, on Minit Records. In addition to Ernie K'Doe's *Mother-In-Law* and The Showmen's *It Will Stand*, it features six outstanding Irma Thomas songs: *I Done Got Over It*, *Cry On*, *It's Raining*, *Gone*, *I Did My Part*, and my choice for the next love song on the list, *Ruler Of My Heart*.

### ***Ruler of My Heart***

"Ruler of my heart,  
Driver of my soul,  
Where can you be?  
I wait patiently.

My heart cries out.  
Pain inside.  
Where can you be?  
I wait patiently.”

Now when Irma sings about love, each song is filled with soulful emotion. And pain. So much so that the song was retitled *Pain In My Heart* with some new lyrics and became the title track on Otis Redding’s debut album. It sparked some copyright issues due to its similarities with Irma’s *Ruler of My Heart*. The Rolling Stones, in addition to covering Irma’s *Time Is On My Side*, covered Otis’ *Pain In My Heart*.

In case this song shows too much devotion to one man, you should listen to the words of Irma’s *Anyone Who Knows What Love Is*.

### ***Anyone Who Knows What Love Is***

“You can blame me,  
Try to shame me,  
And still I’ll care for you.

You can run around,  
Even put me down,  
Still I’ll be there for you.”

### ***Someday***

Sadly, many love songs are about being left for another, or the regret of not realizing until it’s too late what a great love one had. Smiley Lewis (real name Overton Amos Lemons) recorded his sad love song, *Someday* (1956, on the Imperial label):

“Someday you’ll want me like I want you,  
But I’ll be gone with somebody new.

Someday you will cry the way I did.  
You’ll hang your head, but tears can’t be hid.”

In that same genre is a sad song powerfully delivered by Johnny Adams:

### ***I Won’t Cry***

Songwriter Dorothy LaBostrie (1928 – 2007), who cleaned up the lyrics to make Little Richard's *Tutti Frutti* a big hit, wrote the song *I Won't Cry* in 1958 on Joe Ruffino's Ric label.

"I won't cry,  
And I won't shed a tear.  
I'll keep on loving you year after year,  
even though you left me.  
Ohhh I, Ohhh I, I won't cry."



*Irma Thomas*

*Smiley Lewis*

*Johnny Adams*

### **"Gotta Have Love"**

This song was recorded in 1969 by Paul Variso and the Milestones. On October 26, 2011, Paul Varisco co-founded the nonprofit Gleason Initiative Foundation, better known as Team Gleason, formed only months after his son-in-law and former player for the New Orleans Saints, Steve Gleason, was diagnosed with ALS. Paul and the Milestones still perform around New Orleans in popular venues such as Rock 'n' Bowl. Here are a just a few lines from Paul's popular song, *Gotta Have Love*:

"The sun came up and opened my eyes.  
It was a beautiful day.  
But when my mind woke up I realized  
That the day was really gray.

I don't have anyone to share it.

I don't have anyone to care for."



*Paul Varisco on the mike at Rock 'n' Bowl*

### ***Something You Got***

Chris Kenner expressed his love in this 1961 song on the Instant label:

"Something you got, baby,  
Makes me work all day.  
Something you got, baby,  
Makes me bring home my pay.  
Something you got, baby,  
You ought to know.  
My, my, whoa, whoa,  
I love you so."

*There are so many great New Orleans love songs, I will mention just a few in passing.*

### ***It's You I Love***

"Fats" Domino sings once again:

"You know I love you, want you to love me too.  
Let's get together, like the old folks used to do.

We'll get married, go to Paris.  
Come here, it's me, it's you I love."

"Fats" also recorded these love-filled tunes: *I Still Love You*, *Don't You Know I Love You* and *When My Dreamboat Comes Home*.

### ***Would You***

Dave Bartholomew asks "If I loved you, darlin', would you love me, too?"



*1950s R&B legends from New Orleans, The Spiders*

### ***You're The One***

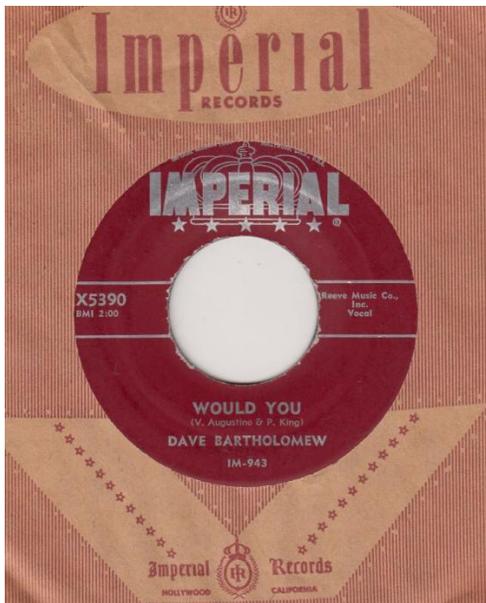
Within just two years in the 1950s, the group had all of their five entries on the U.S. R&B chart hit the Top 10. *Witchcraft* in 1956 was covered by Elvis Presley. *You're the One* was recorded by The Spiders on the Imperial label:

"You're the one. You're the only one I'll ever love."

In 1955, Chuck Carbo of The Spiders sang the love song, *Bells In My Heart*. Chuck Como (real name Chuck Cavet) of New Orleans recorded the song nine years later.

### ***Bells In My Heart***

"Yes, there's bells in my heart,  
And there's stars in my eyes.  
I'm so in love with you,  
Let it be the tie that binds.  
With joy and ecstasy,  
You're just the one for me.  
Great day, there's bells in my heart."



*Would You by Dave Bartholomew*

*Chuck Como*

### ***Tain't It The Truth***

The late great "Emperor of the Universe" sings another song of love's heartbreak:

"But now she's gone,  
And you feel so bad  
'Cause she's the best girl you ever had.  
Hmm mmm, Oh yeah, tain't it the truth?"

### ***Te-Ta-Te-Ta-Ta***

But in this 1961 song, Mr. K-Doe is full of uplifting, danceable love:

"We fell in love on a Wednesday mornin'  
With all of our heart and soul,  
And, people,  
I know you should have been there  
To see my girl rock and roll.

And she said  
Ah-ah-ah ah-tee-ta-tee-ta-ta  
Every time she cha-cha-cha ...

Her love for me is wider than the ocean  
More deeper than the sea  
Whoa-oh she make me feel so good  
When she rock and roll for me."

### ***Nothing Sweet As You***

Bobby Mitchell tells us there's "Nothing sweet as you, as honey comes from bees."

### ***Don't Know Much***

Not really a song with a New Orleans flavor, but it was an international hit. Aaron Neville and Linda Ronstadt team up in this 1989 romantic duet written by the powerhouse songwriting team of Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, along with Tom Snow. *Don't Know Much* won Linda and Aaron the 1990 Grammy for Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal and was nominated for Song of the Year:

"I don't know much, but I know I love you. That may be all I need to know."

Aaron also scored in 1966 with *Tell It Like It Is* ("But if you want me to love you then, baby, I will") and *The Greatest Love* in 1977.

### ***New Orleans Ladies***

By Louisiana Leroux, this is a song not just for one lady in particular, but to all the lovely women of New Orleans that "sashay by".

### ***Lover of Love***

This is a great Toussaint tune with recordings by both him and Lee Dorsey. It's about a person who loves love just to be in love: "No one in particular, that's your line."

### ***In The Same Old Way***

And Tommy Ridgley sings,

"Without you, life ain't worth the living,  
I'm gonna thank you darlin' for the love you've been giving ...

"Always love me, baby, in the same old way."

I'll end with another love song to the city of New Orleans by Leigh 'Lil' Queenie Harris and the Percolators entitled *My Darlin' New Orleans*.

### ***My Darlin' New Orleans***

From 1981, with a funky Mardi Gras Indian beat, the energetic and sassy 'Lil' Queenie sings about her "praline hometown" with these appropriate lyrics:

"Corner bars, our streetcars"

"The big oaks, the old folks"

"On patios, in my funky clothes"

"Jazz bands and ceiling fans"



*'Lil' Queenie puts her heart and soul into each performance.*

Sadly, 'Lil' Queenie, who grew up in Old Metairie, is receiving hospice

care in North Carolina for late stage breast cancer.

Like the great "Fats" Domino, these artists had a "Whole Lotta Loving" for their craft and in their artistry, plus a great big love of New Orleans.

May love fill your hearts and those whom you love on Valentine's Day.

## **NED HÉMARD**

New Orleans Nostalgia  
"New Orleans Love Songs"  
Ned Hémard  
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